

**NationalJournalCommunicationsCouncil**

**Media  
University**

**AMU 421: Digital Friendly Media Relations**

# Updating the Press Release

April 24, 2015

# The Press Release Has Come a Long Way

Press Releases Evolved from Tool for Briefing Journalists to Capturing Broad Audience Engagement

Charting Key Moments in Post-Internet Press Release Development

Late-1990s

## Significant Milestones

Organizations begin to establish websites, creating an audience beyond journalists for press release engagement

Infographics (first used by USA Today) become conduit for sharing press releases with emphasis on data and statistics

**Shift Communications (a public relations agency) pioneers the first “social media” press release**

PitchEngine created to fill need for a platform distribution channel that handled more diverse use cases and tapped into latest distribution technologies

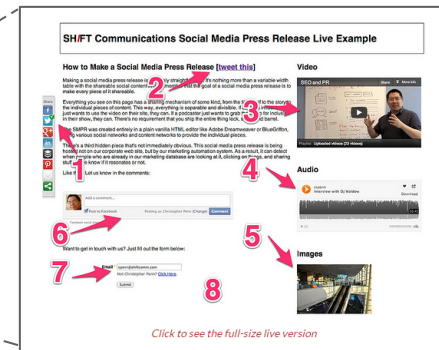
Vatican begins to experiment with using text messages for press releases, a practice still used to this day

Shift Communications updates social media release to take advantage of Twitter age, need for brevity in all communications

**Facebook issues press release in haiku form, illustrating extent of potential experimentation with press release delivery**

## Noteworthy Illustrations

### 1. Shift Focuses on Shareable Content



- ✓ Creating independently sharable pieces of content (audio, images, etc.)
- ✓ Limiting number of characters in headline (suggested max: 55)
- ✓ Incorporating video where possible
- ✓ Linking to social media with plug-ins
- ✓ Leveraging back-end analytics to determine consumer base

### 2. Facebook Gets Creative

Upon hitting 1 billion users, Facebook used creative writing and the language of the internet to send a unique message:

*One billion users!  
What's next for Mark Zuckerberg?  
Pwn mobile and search.*

Present-Day

# Google Makes its Mark on Press Release Distribution

Recent Strategic Changes to Google SEO Algorithms Profoundly Impact Reach and Content of Press Releases

## Watching the Pendulum Swing in Two Years

**2013:** *Google made it difficult for organizations to “game the system...” by punishing press releases with algorithmic changes*

### Rationale in Focus

- Minimize value of press releases in SEO
- Did not consider press releases equivalent to “news”
- Overly promotional press releases blacklisted as spam
- Should have an inborn audience associated with release versus being used to create an audience
- Meant to force organizations to produce more useful and informative content versus material meant to drive traffic and filled with buzzy keywords

**2015:** *Google opened up its algorithm to place organizational press releases on same footing as journalists’ news content*

### Rationale in Focus

- Allow organizations to be viewed on equal footing as preferred news sites and syndicates
- Levels playing field so that institutions can compete for views
- Designed to let users “get to the right answer” faster than ever before
- Could potentially hurt news outlets that once relied on Google’s preferential treatment
- Signals evolution of organizations’ strategy away from content Google would have blocked two years ago (now more legitimate purveyors of content)

## In Their Own Words

“There is a difference between content marketing and SEO: while the first can service the second, and certainly a good SEO strategy will necessitate content, the primary goal of content marketing as a discipline is to engage your community. **The press release is one of the earliest forms of content marketing as we know it – and as such – any press release that is done primarily for SEO purposes is just bad PR...**Google did the press release a favor.” – Leslie Nuccio, Senior Content Marketing Strategist, *Meltwater Group*

# May I Have Your Attention, Please

Too Much of a Curiosity Gap in Release Headlines Harms Potential Coverage and Engagement



**Common Headline Approach**



**The Offending Headline**



**The Unanswered Question(s)**



**The New and Improved**

The “Empty Celebration”

*America’s Beverage Companies Mark Earth Day and Aim to Boost Fuel Economy Further*

How is the industry marking Earth Day?

*This Earth Day Marks Double-Digit Increase in Fuel Economy Since 2010 for America’s Beverage Industry*

The “Statement-Without-A-Statement”

*NPA Chief Scientist Comments on Research Associating Dietary Supplements with Increased Cancer Risk*

What are his comments? Does he agree or disagree?

*Link Between Dietary Supplements and Cancer Risk Unfounded, Based on Researcher Bias*

The “We’ve Got Findings to Share”

*Benchmark Study Yields Key Insights Into Global Organic Food Trade*

What are these key insights?

*Global Demand for U.S.-Grown Organic Means Missed Opportunities for American Farmers*

“Jargon Bingo”

*NADCO: As Budget Advances, SBA 504 Program Back at Zero Subsidy*

???

*After Saving Thousands of Small Business Owners During Recession, SBA Loan Program Will Again Be Self-Sustaining*

# A Good Quote is Hard to Come By

Understanding What Passes the Publication Test Can Inform Writing Choices

What We Say...



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, April 15, 2015 --

Through enough Seaboard Detroit sizes a

*“On the heels of organic sales now nearing a milestone 5 percent share of the total food market, organic stakeholders have gathered in Washington to educate lawmakers and policymakers. Our latest industry data show robust demand and great opportunity for the organic sector,” said Laura Batcha, CEO and Executive Director of OTA. “OTA’s consumer survey has already found that organic doesn’t have any demographic boundaries; this additional new data prove it doesn’t have regional or partisan boundaries.”*

- ✓ Comprehensive
- ✓ Technical
- ✓ Careful

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✓ Watered-down

...and What Readers Ultimately See

**AP**

**Consumers buying more organic products despite high prices**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The price of organic foods and other products doesn't seem to be



**Organic Trade Association unveils promising stats on industry growth**

*“Our survey shows organic has turned a corner,” said OTA’s Batcha.*

WASHINGTON, April 15, 2015 - The Organic Trade

*“The only way to create change is for there to be widespread adoption,” Batcha said.*

- ✓ Short
- ✓ Colloquial
- ✓ Provocative

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✓ Memorable